

Weaving the Word

Murder Charges

Part 22 – February 1, 2015

Welcome to a place where we count the cost to follow the One who paid the price.

Have you ever wanted someone dead?

This sentiment isn't always the product of blatant rage. That would be *too obvious*. We'd be more inclined – *if not driven* – to deal with it.

This insidious sin likes to travel with a more subtle animosity, making it much easier to rationalize, when we're mistreated.

"It'd be such a relief if they were just out of my life – *for good*."

"Honestly, this world would be a better place without *'em*."

It's not always something big. Usually isn't. Reckless driver. Creepy neighbor. Obnoxious boss. Flawed husband. Imperfect wife.

"I wish they'd just disappear."

Who have you ever wanted dead?



The religious leaders were teaching their disciples that the more good things you do for God, the more righteous you become.

Which simply wasn't – and *isn't* – true.

In fact, **it mostly leads people to resent God for His seemingly never-ending and ultimately impossible-to-live-up-to demands.**



Meanwhile, Jesus is teaching *His* disciples a *surpassing righteousness* of love that stems from a changed heart – which requires God to reveal *His* heart in such a *profound way* that it transforms every heart that embraces it.

The more we understand it, the more we can *embrace* it.

And, the more that we embrace, the more grateful we become.

And, gratitude is the only pure motivation for righteousness.

It's also the only effective, joyful, and lasting one.

The religious leaders practiced and taught external, behavioral compliance, devoid of love.

Charity without compassion. Prayer without sympathy. Obedience without joy. Guidance without grace. Which of these do you ever catch yourself performing?

Jesus is training His apprentices to practice their faith from the inside out, by always looking to the *heart* of the matter.

"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment." – Matthew 5:21-22a NIV

Don't get Him wrong. **Anger itself isn't sin** (it's just the icky feeling of being aggravated or provoked), **it's how we react to it.**

There's even righteous anger over wickedness, injustice, and abuse. However, **there's no such thing as righteous malice**, that is, anger that aches for the *destruction* of another.



Anger isn't sin; but it's often the trigger.

We're very vulnerable to sin when we're fired up.

Do you know your triggers?

We can all list our pet peeves; but, we're less likely to be as aware of the anxiety-producing triggers that set off our sin.

What sets you off? Dishonesty? Disrespect? Disloyalty? Loud music? Last minute changes? Poor communication? Pressure?

Ever know someone who never shoots off their mouth?

Don't make the mistake of thinking they don't get angry.

They've just learned how to keep their safety on.

We can't control our triggers, but we can control our response.

[Paul wrote] In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. **[Because he'll use your anger against you, to subject you to judgment; so]** ... Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. – Ephesians 4:26-27, 31 NIV

This is what Jesus is working out of His young apprentices.

Not just their external conduct, which is *difficult but doable*, but their *internal* conduct, which is *downright impossible* ... without a heart that's being transformed by the heart of God.

“Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ [senseless; empty-headed; it was a term of reproach and reprimand] is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.” – Matthew 5:22b NIV



Both terms basically mean *fool*. But, ‘Raca’ was reserved as a type of offensive rebuke that was subject to the Jewish Sanhedrin council.

It's like, if I use a ‘dirty word’, I'll be in much deeper *doo-doo* than if I use an acceptable synonym that means the *exact same thing*.



Murder and f-bombs are bad and rightly judged; but, anger and ‘clean’ synonyms can be far more sinister, because they're so deceiving.

We focus on the big, obvious, *external* things.

Jesus' point is just the opposite: **What seems like the lesser bad, often poses the greater *internal* threat.** *Why?* They're less obvious.



If a tire blows out, you're stuck; you got'a deal with it. But, if that oil light comes on, you can ignore it, get used to it even.

“Hello, little engine light. You don't seem so serious.”



Because, it isn't ... *until it is*. **In the long run, the lesser is worse if you accommodate it.**

Murder is more likely to send us to jail, but a murderous heart is more likely to send us to hell. *Why?* People who get caught tend to repent; and those who don't, don't.



It's hard to fool yourself about murder, even if you get away with it, because you know in your heart that you're a murderer.

But, **we deceive ourselves about heart-murder**, especially when it poses as *righteous anger* or *a wish that they'd just disappear*.

Just a few days before, Jesus and His young followers had been abused in a synagogue, by their religious leaders, when Jesus healed a man with a withered hand, on the Sabbath.

Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus. – Mark 3:6 NIV

They're pretty far past *just wishing He'd disappear!*

Imagine how they must've treated Jesus' teenage disciples.

"Raca! Raca! Your blasphemous 'raca' rabbi is dead – *and so are you!*"

So, they retreated to the lake. Confused. Those in authority had rejected Jesus. Four disciples went back to fishing ... until the miraculous catch reaffirmed God's hand of *true* authority.

Then they repented; and suddenly they're appointed as apostles!

Imagine how they feel *now* about those *blind* religious hypocrites.

Talk about righteous anger run amok!

"We'll take those fools before the Sanhedrin! Those old fools are violating the Law they claim to uphold. They're plotting murder! They've profaned God's House!"

I see Jesus' dialog as a mastery of communication. Brilliant. Compassionate. Challenging. He simultaneously disarms their defense, salves their wounds, and confronts their sin.

"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' [You're right. They're bad. The very thing they're plotting against Me is against the Law they claim to uphold. But, I'm not talking to them, am I ... I'm talking to you. And, I demand a righteousness of love that surpasses theirs. And, you are rationalizing an anger that is not righteous. It feels righteous, I know. But, examine yourselves. It's just thinly veiled murder of the heart. You wish them dead; yet, even now I wish them life] But I tell you that *anyone* who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, [I get it] anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. [And, yes, the things they called you and cursed at you are a violation of the Law, and subject to the Sanhedrin; but, is that route you really want to go? Is that the best way to communicate a surpassing righteousness of love and forgiveness? You are within your rights. They violated you, sinned against you] But *anyone* who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell." [Including those within their rights] – Matthew 5:21-22 NIV

We're so prone to say and do – and especially *think* – hurtful, malicious, aggressive, things when we're acting out of anger.

Righteous anger can be handled in the most unrighteous ways.

Because, anger *itself* clouds our judgment.

So, we best be judging our anger before our anger is judged.